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SPECIAL TRAINING AS A FACTOR IN SCIENTIFIC PREPARATION FOR NATIONAL DEFENSE¹

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AMERICAN civilization is an improvisation; and to that method we are wedded. So do we expect to create an army. But I do not believe that improvised armies will force a decision in the present and even less in future wars. However loudly the statesmen and pressmen may shout the contrary, an immense disproportion of power between trained, semi-trained, and untrained armies, is one of the outstanding features of the present conflict. And training tells in geometrical ratio as we climb the ranks from soldier and corporal, to sergeant, lieutenant, captain, and upwards. The greatest asset of a brigade is one trained brigadier-general; of a division, one trained divisional general. And this is the lowest rank officer who actually handles problems in combined tactics. Above him, special training becomes enormously difficult and valuable.

Columbus found out how to stand an egg on end; von Moltke perceived the equally patent fact that it was far more important, and much more difficult, to train generals than sub-lieutenants. But we, knowing little of von Moltke, still cherish the notion that generals are produced at West Point; as if one could grow elm-trees under earthenware pots!

At bottom, what it all comes to is that military success is not achieved in the field. It is attained by a long, arduous, and scientific preparation for war during peace time. Whatever emergency measures we may adopt as passing expedients, whatever may be in immediate store for us, whether of good luck or bad fortune, we must sooner or later get down to the sci-

¹ Read at the meeting of the Academy of Political Science on May 18, 1916.
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tific study of and, following that, to the scientific preparation for war.

Every national problem of defense is composed of factors so various that for one country to copy another argues insufficient knowledge and skill. Switzerland and especially Russia, whose cases present most military analogies with that of this country, would yet be futile models to set up for imitation. The threats that face us, the densities of our population districts, the distribution of our economic areas, the power of our railroad systems—all these are among the factors that govern in the most immediate sense the solution of the problem of defense. Hard work, hard study, of the details of the problem, are necessary before correct solutions can be found.

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